

Jacksonville City Hall
205 West Main Street
Jacksonville
Jackson County
Oregon

HABS No. ORE-66

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service
Department of the Interior
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY HABS No. ORE-66

JACKSONVILLE CITY HALL

Location: 205 West Main Street, Jacksonville, Jackson County,
Oregon.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

When the town of Jacksonville was first platted in 1852, the west line of James Cluggage's donation land claim ran through what would later be the City Hall lot--thus dividing it into two parcels that would be bought and sold separately.¹ The doubtful legality of the title notwithstanding, several businesses operated on the site between 1854 and 1868. In 1868 James Cluggage sold the part of the City Hall lot within his claim to Morris Mensor, who already owned the remaining ground.² As was the case with many other lots in Jacksonville, the sale of land by Cluggage simply formalized what had become an established pattern of settlement and building in the town.

The first known building on the City Hall lot was the brick store built by Maury and Davis in 1854.³ In that year, Benjamin T. Davis acquired bricks, evidently as part of the settlement of a mortgage against Horace and Abel Reed, the local brick manufacturers.⁴ In 1856, the store was advertised in the Table Rock Sentinel as a "fire-proof building" on the corner of Main and Oregon Streets.⁵ The store operated from 1854 through the 1850's, but was a casualty of the sectional crisis preceding the Civil War. Benjamin T. Davis was the nephew of Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederate States of America; as war approached, he supported the Confederate cause. R.F. Maury was a Unionist who became Colonel of the United States Army regiment raised in Jackson County in 1863.⁶

In 1863, the sheriff sold the store and lot "formerly Maury and Davis" to satisfy a court decree foreclosing a mortgage that John L. Ely had given the former business partners.⁷ The plat of the town approved in 1864 shows the building as a "Government Store House,"⁸ and a map drawn in 1868 records it as a dilapidated structure.⁹ In that year, John and Magdaline Ely, then resident in Indiana, sold the store to Morris Mensor; a few months later, Mensor also acquired the street frontage from James Cluggage, thus completing the legal assembly of the corner as a single lot.¹⁰

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Morris Mensor was a merchant whose business seems to have moved from site to site fairly often. Although usually located on a secondary street, Mensor--for a short time before purchasing the former Maury and Davis store--had rented space on California Street.¹¹ In July 1868, the Jacksonville Reveille Weekly published a list of incomes for the previous year; Mensor was shown as earning \$231, one of the lowest incomes for a shopkeeper.¹² In late August of that year, the same paper reported that Morris Mensor had moved his general merchandise business from California Street to a "new brick building."¹³ Since he had purchased the City Hall lot with a dilapidated building several months earlier, it is possible that in the interim he had so extensively renovated or even rebuilt the old store that it could be described as his "new brick building." At any rate, it is clear that substantial improvements had been made to the building before 1872, since the assessment was increased to \$15,000 in that year.¹⁴ When the Board of Trustees of Jacksonville was considering purchase of the building as a City Hall, the Democratic Times referred to the structure as the "old Mensor building," which also suggests that he may have rebuilt the earlier structure.¹⁵

On January 9, 1880, the town officials negotiated to purchase the building for \$450.¹⁶ They apparently decided that the building was inadequate for use as a City Hall, however, since on August 6 the Building Committee received bids for razing the structure.¹⁷ By the end of August, David Linn had received a \$1,995 building contract for a new structure, to be completed except for plastering by January 1, 1881.¹⁸ The specifications called for a building twenty-five feet wide, twenty-five feet tall, and seventy-five feet long, with a council room, a jail, a truck house, and a cellar, "all of the latest and most convenient architecture."¹⁹ The minutes of the Town Trustees for 1880 have been lost, along with any discussion regarding the design of the building. However, the design seems to follow that of the frame office building the city had erected in 1861. That structure had two rooms divided by a frame partition, with the truck house attached to one side of the building as a lean-to; such an arrangement would accommodate the three functions--meeting room, jail, and firehouse--dictated by the Board of Trustees.²⁰ In 1883, the President of the Board of Trustees was ordered to purchase a new "hand fire-engine, a hose reel, a fire bell, and sufficient hose." It therefore appears that the firehouse was built, although it no longer exists.²¹

Since its construction in 1881, the City Hall has served continuously as the town's public meeting place. It is currently used for meetings of the Board of Trustees. A new administrative building and fire hall has been built elsewhere in Jacksonville.

FOOTNOTES

- 1
G. Sherman, "Plat of Jacksonville," 1852. For an explanation of donation land claims, see Ross and Owens, "Historical Area Study of Jacksonville Oregon" (HABS No. ORE-127).
- 2
Jackson County Deeds, June 16, 1868, and August 27, 1868.
- 3
A.G. Walling, History of Southern Oregon, Comprising Jackson, Josephine, Douglas, Curry, and Coos Counties (Portland, Oregon: The Publishing House of A.G. Walling, 1884), p. 364.
- 4
Jackson County Deeds, January 9, 1854.
- 5
Table Rock Sentinel, January 5, 1856.
- 6
Hubert Howe Bancroft, History of Oregon, 1848-1888 (San Francisco: The History Company, 1888), p. 496.
- 7
Jackson County Deeds, November 4, 1863.
- 8
C.E. Curley [and J.S. Howard], "Map of Jacksonville," 1864.
- 9
"Map of Jacksonville," 1868.
- 10
Jackson County Deeds, June 16, 1868, and August 27, 1868.
- 11
"Map of Jacksonville," 1868. The building was owned by P.J. Ryan.
- 12
Jacksonville Reveille Weekly, July 4, 1868.
- 13
Ibid., August 29, 1868.

14

Jackson County Commissioners' Journals, September 2, 1872.

15

Democratic Times, January 2, 1880.

16

Ibid., January 2, 1880.

17

Ibid., August 6, 1880.

18

Ibid., August 27, 1880.

19

Ibid., August 27, 1880.

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Town of Jacksonville Board of Trustees' Minutes, October 21, 1861, details of the floor plan and room arrangements for the first City Hall. These Minutes are part of Oregon Historical Society, MSS 916, Box 5, Vol. II.

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Town of Jacksonville Board of Trustees' Minutes, May 5, 1883. These Minutes are in the possession of the Town of Jacksonville.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. Description of Exterior:

1. Number of stories: The entire building is one story.
2. Number of bays: The front (north) facade has three bays with a central entrance. The side (east) elevation has five bays--four windows and a door at the southernmost end of the facade.
3. Layout, shape: The building is a rectangular block with a modern shed-roofed addition along the west wall. An addition of this type has always been part of the building however. There is another addition on the south end.

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4. Wall construction, finish, color: The walls are brick and unpainted. Evidence in the brickwork suggests that an awning once covered the walk in front of the building.
 5. Chimneys: At the southeast corner of the building there is a small chimney stack designed for a heating stove flue.
 6. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The entrance doorway contains a transom light above the lintel and wooden double doors below--each leaf having two panes of glass over a lower section with two small recessed and molded panels. The entire opening is spanned with a segmental arch.
 - b. Windows: The windows are four-over-four-light, double-hung sash. Exposed wooden architraves are narrow; the top edge is slightly arched below the segmental spanning arches.
 7. Roof:
 - a. Shape: The roof is flat and hidden behind a parapet.
 - b. Cornice: The front (north) facade has a high parapet. An ornamental entablature on the front of the parapet consists of a raised brick band for a frieze below a row of brick brackets that resemble inverted stepped pyramids. The brackets support a corona of two courses, topped by a slightly projecting course. Above this decorative entablature, the plane of the wall continues; the center section of the wall is stepped up several courses. The side elevations are unornamented; a parapet masks the eaves.
 - c. Tower: Over the rear extension an openwork wooden tower supports a bell and is covered by a low hipped roof.
- B. Description of Interior:

The interior is a single large room. It has been completely remodelled in recent years.

C. Site and Surroundings:

1. Orientation and general setting: The north facade faces Main Street. The east elevation parallels South Oregon Street.
2. Other structures: Along the east side of the building there is a water trough of concrete set along the edge of the sidewalk.

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